

Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program

FY 2003 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: JANUARY 15, 2003



U.S. Department of Agriculture



Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

SUMMARY: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) requests applications for the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge (SPEC) Grants Program for fiscal year (FY) 2003 to promote and strengthen agriscience and agribusiness education. The anticipated amount available for support of this program in FY 2003 is approximately \$ 960,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for SPEC projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SPEC grant. CSREES additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next Request for Applications (RFA) for this program.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on January 15, 2003 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this RFA are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using an express mail or overnight courier service is: Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 1420, Waterfront Centre; 800 9th Street, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20024; Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Applications sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be sent to the following address: Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2245.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Program Liaison Staff; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA-CSREES; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@reeusda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program RFA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Mr. P. Gregory Smith; National Program Leader; Higher Education Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; STOP 2251; 1400 Independence Ave, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2251; Telephone: (202) 720-1973; Fax: (202) 720-2030; E-mail: gsmith@reeusda.gov.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: CSREES is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program. Such comments will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future

RFAs for competitive programs. Comments should be submitted as provided for in the **Addresses** and **Dates** portions of this RFA.

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.226, Secondary Agriculture Education Grants.

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PART I--GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 1405 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, (7 U.S.C. 3121) designates the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lead Federal agency for agriculture research, extension and teaching in the food and agricultural sciences. Authority for this program is contained in section 1417(j) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3152(j)). In accordance with the statutory authority, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA), who has delegated the authority to the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), will award grants to: (a) promote and strengthen secondary education and 2-year postsecondary education in agriscience and agribusiness in order to help ensure the existence in the United States of a qualified workforce to serve the food and agricultural sciences system; and (b) promote complementary and synergistic linkages among secondary, 2-year postsecondary, and higher education programs in the food and agricultural sciences in order to attain excellence in education and to encourage more young Americans to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the food and agricultural sciences.

B. Purpose, Priorities, and Fund Availability

It is intended that projects supported by the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge (SPEC) Grants Program will: (1) address a State, regional, or national educational need; (2) involve a creative or nontraditional approach toward addressing that need that can serve as a model to others; (3) encourage and facilitate better working relationships in the education community, as well as between educational institutions and the private sector, to enhance program quality and supplement available resources; and (4) result in benefits that will likely transcend the project duration and USDA support.

Approximately \$ 960,000 is expected to be available to fund SPEC projects in FY 2003. The available funds will be divided evenly among the program categories (see Part II, B., 1.). CSREES reserves the right to transfer funds among categories.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

C. Eligibility

Applications may be submitted by public secondary schools or by public or private nonprofit junior and community colleges. Eligible institutions must meet the definition of a secondary school or a public or private nonprofit junior and community college as defined in this RFA (Part VI, G.). Recipients may subcontract portions of the award. Subcontractual arrangements may be made with organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

For secondary schools, each separate school in a school district that meets the definition of a public secondary school is eligible for SPEC Grants Program awards. For community or junior colleges, individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree granting institutions are treated as separate institutions, and are therefore eligible for SPEC Grants Program awards. Accreditation must be by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Separate branches or campuses of a college or university that are not individually accredited as degree-granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions.

If an institution cannot accept Federal funds directly, it must submit a letter stating that it will accept the award, but that funds must be submitted through a fiscal agent. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant. Also, the entity acting as the fiscal agent must submit a letter stating it is willing to serve as the fiscal agent for the applicant. Both the fiscal agent and the applicant school or institution must submit complete management information.

A teacher or student recipient (eligible participant) of a SPEC grant must be a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this RFA. Where eligibility is claimed under 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22), documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.

D. Indirect Costs

Pursuant to section 1462 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3310), indirect costs are limited for this program to 19 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, the recovery of indirect costs under this program may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 19 percent of total Federal funds awarded. Another method of calculating the maximum allowable is 23.456 percent of the total direct costs. (This limitation also applies to the recovery of indirect costs by any subawardee or subcontractor, and should be reflected in the subrecipients' budgets.) If no rate has been negotiated, a reasonable dollar amount (equivalent to or less than 19 percent of total Federal funds requested) in lieu of indirect costs may be requested, subject to approval by USDA. This same indirect cost limitation applies to subcontracts.

E. Matching Requirements

A grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources. (See Part III, B.12.c.)

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Use of Funds for Facilities

The use of grant funds to plan, acquire or construct a building or facility, or to acquire land, is not allowed. With prior approval, in accordance with cost principles set forth in OMB Circulars A-21 and A-87, as applicable, grant funds may be used to purchase equipment, or for

improvements, alterations, renovations, or repairs to land, buildings, or equipment, deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching spaces and resources in order to carry out a funded project under this grant. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrate that such expenditures are incidental to the major purpose for which the grant request is made.

2. Use of Funds for Entertainment-Related Expenses

Federal funds may not be used to support social functions, promotional items (T-shirts, coffee mugs, etc.), and other entertainment-related expenses. Federal funds must be used strictly for items of an educational nature, excluding reimbursement for tuition and academic fees.

G. Types of Applications

In FY 2003, applications may be submitted to the SPEC Program as one of the following two types of requests:

1. New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the SPEC Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part IV, Review Process.

2. Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the SPEC Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary. (See Response to Previous Review, Part III, B.5.) Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

PART II--PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Project Types

There are no limitations on the number of applications that may be submitted by an eligible institution, as defined in Part I, C. Project periods may range from eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) months. Projects should conclude no sooner than eighteen (18) months after the award date in order to allow applicants sufficient time to evaluate the results and impacts. An applicant institution may be awarded a maximum of two (2) grants under this program. Applicants may submit:

1. Regular Project Proposal (Single Institution)

In a regular project proposal, the applicant executes the project. Applicants may request up to \$25,000 (total, not per year).

2. Joint Project Proposal

In a joint project proposal, the applicant executes the project with assistance from one or more additional entities (see definition in Part IV, G.). Applicants may request up to \$40,000 (total, not per year) for a joint project proposal. The lead institution may be awarded a maximum of two (2) grants under this program.

Note that the funds requested **do not** have to be divided equally among project years.

B. Program Area Description

1. Program Categories

Applications submitted for the FY 2003 SPEC program must fall within one of the following two categories:

- (a) **Secondary Schools:** Secondary education projects that improve the teaching of agriscience or agribusiness in any of the grades 9 through 12; or
- (b) **Junior or Community Colleges:** Associate degree-level (2-year postsecondary) education projects that improve the teaching of agriscience or agribusiness.

2. Educational Need Areas

SPEC grant applications must be innovative, strengthen agriscience or agribusiness education, and address one or more of the Educational Need Areas identified below.

Educational Need Areas for FY 2003 are:

- (a) Enhancing Agricultural Education Through Curriculum Improvements. Establishing or improving existing curricula in agriscience or agribusiness. Emphasis may be on the development of stand-alone modules or courses of study, or on the integration of agriscience and/or agribusiness into other academic areas. Innovative instructional approaches or techniques to enhance student learning, including distance education and experiential learning, are encouraged.
- (b) Increasing Faculty Teaching Competencies. Improving teaching competencies, subject matter expertise, including knowledge of international cultures, and skills in advising students in agriscience and agribusiness areas. Developmental activities may include both formal training and informal continuing education.
- (c) Expanding Career Opportunities. Encouraging students to pursue higher education in order to prepare them for scientific and professional careers in the food and agricultural sciences. Examples of eligible projects may include career placement or higher education academic counseling activities with the expected outcome of encouraging graduates to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the food and agricultural sciences. Other eligible projects may expand students' career interests through mentoring or professional shadowing activities, internships or practicums, visiting lecturers or career fairs, summer agriscience and agribusiness camps including international learning experiences, or other similar experiential learning activities.
- (d) Integrating Agricultural Education into the Curriculum. By incorporating agriscience and agribusiness subject matter into the general instructional program, particularly classes in math, science, business, and consumer education, society gains a better understanding of food, health and environmental issues.
- (e) Facilitating Interaction with Other Academic Institutions. Promoting linkages between secondary, 2-year postsecondary, and baccalaureate degree granting institutions to maximize the development and use of resources geared toward agriscience and agribusiness education. Emphasis between secondary and higher education may focus on, but is not limited to, the development and use of articulation agreements, 2+2 or 2+2+2 arrangements, advanced placement credits, or the sharing of faculty and facilities. Partnerships, collaborative arrangements and shared resources between institutions (including course credit sharing arrangements) are encouraged.
- (f) Expanding Student and Workforce Diversity. Promoting educational activities that have the potential to enhance agricultural literacy and increase the diversity of under represented students seeking degrees in agriscience and agribusiness.

Within the Educational Need Areas targeted for support, eligible institutions may propose projects in any discipline(s) identified in Part III, B., 4.

PART III--PREPARATION OF AN APPLICATION

A. Program Application Materials

Program application materials are available at the CSREES Funding Opportunities web site (<http://www.reeusda.gov/1700/funding/ourfund.htm>). If you do not have access to the web page or have trouble downloading material and you would like a hard copy, you may contact the Proposal Services Unit, Office of Extramural Programs, USDA/CSREES at (202) 401-5048. When calling the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting the RFA and associated application forms for the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program. These materials also may be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and phone number to psb@reeusda.gov. State that you want a copy of the RFA and the associated application forms for the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program.

B. Content of Applications

The application should be prepared following the guidelines and the instructions below. Each application must contain the following elements in the order indicated:

1. General

Use the following guidelines to prepare an application. Proper preparation of applications will assist reviewers in evaluating the merits of each application in a systematic, consistent fashion:

- (a) Prepare the application on only one side of the page using standard size (8 1/2" x 11") white paper, one-inch margins, typed or word processed using no type smaller than 12-point font, and double-spaced. Use an easily readable font face (e.g., Geneva, Helvetica, Times Roman).
- (b) Number each page of the application sequentially, starting with the Project Description, including the budget pages, required forms, and any appendices.
- (c) Staple the application in the upper left-hand corner. Do not bind. An original and six (6) copies (seven (7) total) must be submitted in one package, along with two (2) additional copies of the Project Summary, Form CSREES-2003, as a separate attachment.
- (d) Include original illustrations (photographs, color prints, etc.) in all copies of the application to prevent loss of meaning through poor quality reproduction.
- (e) The contents of the application should be assembled in the following order:
 - (1) Proposal Cover Page (Form CSREES-2002)
 - (2) Table of Contents

- (3) Project Summary (Form CSREES-2003)
- (4) Response to Previous Review
- (5) Project Description
- (6) References
- (7) Appendices to Project Description
- (8) Key Personnel
- (9) Collaborative Arrangements (including Letters of Support)
- (10) Conflict of Interest List (Form CSREES-2007)
- (11) Budget (Form CSREES-2004)
- (12) Budget Narrative
- (13) Matching
- (14) Current and Pending Support (Form CSREES-2005)
- (15) Assurance Statement(s) (Form CSREES-2008)
- (16) Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Form CSREES-2006)
- (17) Page B, Proposal Cover Page (Form CSREES-2002), Personal Data on Project Director

2. Proposal Cover Page (Form CSREES-2002)

Page A

Each copy of each grant application must contain a Proposal Cover Page, Form CSREES-2002. One copy of the application, preferably the original, must contain the pen-and-ink signature(s) of the proposing PDs and the authorized organizational representative (AOR), the individual who possesses the necessary authority to commit the organization's time and other relevant resources to the project. If there are more than four co-PDs for an application, please list additional co-PDs on a separate sheet of paper (with appropriate information and signatures) and attach to the Proposal Cover Page (Form CSREES-2002). Any proposed PD or co-PD whose signature does not appear on Form CSREES-2002 or attached additional sheets will not be listed on any resulting grant award. Complete both signature blocks located at the bottom of the Proposal Cover Page form. Please note that Form CSREES-2002 is comprised of two parts - Page A, which is the Proposal Cover Page, and Page B, which is the "Personal Data on Project Director."

Form CSREES-2002 serves as a source document for the CSREES grant database; it is therefore important that it be accurately completed in its entirety, especially the e-mail addresses requested in Blocks 4.c. and 18.c. However, the following items are highlighted as having a high potential for errors or misinterpretations:

- (a) Legal Name of Organization to Which Award Should be Made (Block 1.). For secondary educational institutions, the name of the school, not the school district, should be placed in Block 1.
- (b) Type of Performing Organization (Block 6.a. and 6.b.). For Block 6.a., a check should be placed in the appropriate box to identify the type of organization, which is the legal recipient named in Block 1. Only one box should be checked. For Block

6.b., please check as many boxes as apply to the affiliation of the PD listed in Block 16.

- (c) Title of Proposed Project (Block 7.). The title of the project must be brief (140-character maximum, including spaces), yet represent the major thrust of the effort being proposed. Project titles are read by a variety of nonscientific people; therefore, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, introductory phrases such as “investigation of,” “research on,” “education for,” or “outreach that” should not be used.
- (d) Program to Which You Are Applying (Block 8.). Enter the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program.
- (e) Type of Request (Block 14.). Check the block for “New” or “Resubmission”.
- (f) Project Director (PD) (Blocks 16.-19.). Blocks 16.-18. are used to identify the PD and Block 19. to identify co-PDs. If needed, additional co-PDs may be listed on a separate sheet of paper and attached to Form CSREES-2002, the Proposal Cover Page, with the applicable co-PD information and signatures. Listing multiple co-PDs, beyond those required for genuine collaboration, is discouraged.
- (g) Other Possible Sponsors (Block 21.). List the names or acronyms of all other public or private sponsors including other agencies within USDA to which your application has been or might be sent. In the event you decide to send your application to another organization or agency at a later date, you must inform the identified CSREES program contact as soon as practicable. Submitting your application to other potential sponsors will not prejudice its review by CSREES; however, submitting the same (i.e., duplicate) application to another CSREES program is not permissible.

Page B

Page B should be submitted only with the original signature copy of the application and should be placed as the last page of the original copy of the application. This page contains personal data on the PD(s). CSREES requests this information in order to monitor the operation of its review and awards processes. This page will not be duplicated or used during the review process. Please note that failure to submit this information will in no way affect consideration of your application.

3. Table of Contents

For consistency and ease in locating information, each application must contain a detailed Table of Contents immediately following the proposal cover page. The Table of Contents should contain page numbers for each component of the application. Page numbering should begin with the first page of the Project Description.

4. Project Summary (Form CSREES-2003)

The application must contain a Project Summary, Form CSREES-2003. The summary should be approximately 250 words, contained within the box, placed immediately after the Table of Contents, and not numbered. The names and affiliated organizations of all PDs and co-PDs should be listed on this form, in addition to the title of the project. The summary should be a self-contained, specific description of the activity to be undertaken and should focus on: overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives; plans to accomplish project goal(s); and relevance of the project to the goals of the SPEC Program. The importance of a concise, informative Project Summary cannot be overemphasized. If there are more than three co-PDs for an application, please list additional co-PDs on a separate sheet of paper (with appropriate information) and attach to the Project Summary (Form CSREES-2003).

Applicants should select one of the following codes, which best describes the major academic discipline addressed by the proposal. Enter this code under “Discipline” located on the right-hand side of the Project Summary (Form CSREES-2003).

Discipline	Code
General Food and Agricultural Sciences	G
Agribusiness (includes Management, Marketing, and Agricultural Economics)	M
Agriscience (includes Agricultural/Biological Engineering)	E
Agricultural Social Sciences (includes Agricultural Education, Agricultural Communications, and Rural Sociology)	S
Animal Sciences	A
Aquaculture	Q
Conservation and Renewable Natural Resources (includes Forestry)	C
Entomology – Animal	J
Entomology – Plant	T
Environmental Sciences/Management	L
Food Science/Technology and Manufacturing	F
Human Nutrition	N
Human Sciences/Family and Consumer Sciences (excludes Human Nutrition)	H
International Education/Research (enhancement of U.S. programs)	I
Plant Sciences and Horticulture	P
Related Biological Sciences (includes General/Basic Biotechnology, Biochemistry, and Microbiology)	B
Soil Sciences	D
Veterinary Medicine/Science	V
Water Science	W
Other	O

Please note that at least one Educational Need Area (see Part II, B.2.) must be indicated (by letter, A-F) in the appropriate space on Form CSREES-2003. If more than one Educational Need Area is addressed in your proposal, please list the most representative Educational Need Area first.

5. Response to Previous Review

If the proposal is a resubmission, PDs must respond to the previous panel summary on no more than one page, titled “RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW”. In this section, a clear statement acknowledging comments from the previous reviewers, indicating revisions, rebuttals, etc., that can positively influence the review of the proposal should be made. Further, the resubmitted proposal should clearly indicate changes that have been made in the Project Description. Resubmitted proposals will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part IV, Review Process. This requirement only applies to “Resubmitted Applications” as described in Part I, G., Types of Applications. The “RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW” should be placed directly after the Project Summary, Form CSREES-2003.

6. Project Description

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Description shall not exceed fifteen (15) pages of written text and up to five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (20 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition.

To facilitate proposal review and evaluation, the applicant is advised to include the following underlined wording as headings in the proposal narrative, followed by the applicant’s response for each item. The Project Description must include all of the following:

(A) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education; Significance of the Problem:

(1) Identification of Educational Problem and Project Impact. Clearly identify and explain how the proposed project will address at least one of the Educational Need Area(s) described in Part II, B.2. Briefly explain the project’s anticipated, overall impact on improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education.

(2) Project Justification. Clearly state the specific instructional problem or opportunity to be addressed. Describe how and by whom the focus and scope of the project were determined. Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed project. Discuss how the project will be of value at the State, regional, national, or international level(s). Describe any ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project for which previous funding was received under this program.

(3) Innovation. Describe the proposal’s creative approach to improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education, solving an education problem, or advancing educational equity.

(4) Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus. Indicate how the project is relevant to multiple disciplines in the food and agricultural sciences education, or with other academic curricula. Also, discuss whether the project may be adapted by, or serve as a model for, other institutions.

(B) Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:

(1) Objectives. Cite and discuss the specific project objectives to be accomplished.

(2) Plan of Operation and Methodology. Describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the project. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its

proper and efficient administration. Describe the way in which resources and personnel will be used to conduct the project.

(3) Timetable. Identify all important project milestones and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and closeout.

(4) Products, Results and Measurable Outcomes. Explain the expected products and results, and their potential impact (outcome) on strengthening food and agricultural sciences education in the United States. (**Important Note:** “Products” may be actual items or services acquired with funds, e.g., “...developed three, new Web-based courses containing supplemental materials”; “Results” are intended or unintended consequences of the project, e.g., “...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours”; and “Outcomes / Impacts” are a measure of the results by comparing what might have happened in the absence of the funded project, e.g., “...an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, Web-based course materials”.)

(5) Evaluation Plans. Provide a methodology and implementation plan for evaluating the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable outcomes during the project. Indicate the criteria, and corresponding weight of each, to be used in the evaluation process, describe any data to be collected and analyzed, and explain the methodology that will be used to determine the extent to which the needs underlying the project are met. Demonstrate that the project’s impact on improving education will be evaluated.

(6) Dissemination Plans. Discuss the institution’s commitment to disseminate project results and products. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication.

(7) Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts. Explain how the project will maximize partnership and collaborative efforts to strengthen food and agricultural sciences education (e.g., involvement of faculty in related disciplines at the same institution, joint projects with other educational institutions, or cooperative activities with business or industry). Also explain how it will stimulate academia, the States, or the private sector to join with the Federal partner in enhancing food and agricultural sciences education. Provide evidence, via letters from the parties involved in the partnership or collaborative arrangement.

(C) Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:

(1) Institutional Capability. Discuss the institution's commitment to the project. Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution or the grant period. For example, substantiate that the institution attributes a high priority to the project, discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals, explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or how the project is linked to and supported by the institution's strategic plan.

(2) Institutional Resources. Document that necessary institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project. Demonstrate how the institutional resources to be made available to the project, when combined with the support requested from USDA, will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.

(3) Continuation Plans. Discuss the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. For example, does the institution's long-range budget or academic plan provide for the realistic continuation or

expansion of the initiative undertaken by this project after the grant period ends, are plans for eventual self-support built into the project, are plans being made to institutionalize the program if it meets with success, and are there indications of other continuing non-Federal support?

(D) Key Personnel: In addition to the required separate vitae for each PD (see Part III, B.9., Key Personnel), discuss the adequacy and specific attributes and project responsibilities of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process.

(E) Budget and Cost-effectiveness:

(1) Budget. In addition to the separate, required budget forms and budget narrative forms (see Part III, B., 12.(a) and 12(b)), discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed project activities. Explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff time and salary, travel, equipment, etc., are necessary and reasonable to achieve project objectives. Justify that the total budget, including funds requested from USDA and any matching support provided, are allocated adequately between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s), and will be appropriate to carry out the activities of the project. Provide a summary of sources and amounts of all third party matching support. If the proposal addresses more than one Educational Need Area (see Part II, B.2.), applicants should include estimates of the proportion of the funds requested from USDA that will support each respective area.

(2) Cost-effectiveness. Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, or leverages additional funds. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on an Educational Need Area, or to promote coalition building that could lead to future ventures.

7. References

All references to works cited should be complete, including titles and all co-authors, and should conform to an acceptable journal format. References are not considered in the page-limitation for the Project Description.

8. Appendices to Project Description

Appendices to the Project Description are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

9. Key Personnel

The following should be included, as applicable:

- (a) The roles and responsibilities of each PD and/or collaborator should be clearly described; and
- (b) The vitae of the PD and each co-PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel should be clearly described. This section should include vitae of all key persons who are expected to work on the project, whether or not CSREES funds are sought for their support. The vitae should be limited to two (2) pages each in length, excluding publications listings. The vitae should include a presentation of academic and research credentials, as applicable, e.g., earned degrees, teaching experience, employment history, professional activities, honors and awards, and grants received. A chronological list of **all** publications in **refereed journals** during the past **four (4) years**, including those in press, must be provided, as applicable, for each project member for whom a curriculum vitae is provided. Also list only those **non-refereed** technical publications that have **relevance** to the proposed project. All authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete reference as these usually appear in journals.

10. Collaborative Arrangements

If it will be necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application. See instructions in the application forms for completing Form CSREES-2004, Budget.

11. Conflict of Interest List (Form CSREES-2007)

A “Conflict-of-Interest List,” Form CSREES-2007, must be provided for all individuals who have submitted a vitae in response to item 9.(b) of this part. Each Form CSREES-2007 should list alphabetically, by the last names, the full names of the individuals in the following categories: (a) All co-authors on publications within the past four years, including pending publications and submissions; (b) all collaborators on projects within the past four years, including current and planned collaborations; (c) all thesis or postdoctoral advisees/advisors within the past four years; and (d) all persons in your field with whom you have had a consulting or financial arrangement within the past four years, who stand to gain by seeing the project funded. This form is necessary to assist program staff in excluding from application review those individuals who have conflicts of interest with the personnel in the grant application. The program contact must be informed of any additional conflicts of interest that arise after the application is submitted.

12. Budget

(a) Budget Form (Form CSREES-2004)

Prepare the Budget, Form CSREES-2004, in accordance with instructions provided with the application forms. A budget form is required for each year of requested support. In

addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. When salaries of institutional personnel will be paid by a combination of USDA and institutional funds, the total compensation must not exceed the faculty member's regular annual compensation. Reasonable travel expenses to attend a one- to two-day Project Director's Conference may be included in the requested budget. The budget form may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable statutes, regulations, and Federal cost principles, and these program guidelines, and can be justified as necessary for the successful conduct of the proposed project. Applicants also must include a budget narrative to justify their budget requests (See section (b) below.)

(b) Budget Narrative

All budget categories, with the exception of Indirect Costs, for which support is requested, must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget and justified on a separate sheet of paper and placed immediately behind the Budget form.

(c) Matching Funds

A grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources. The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the proposal immediately following the budget narrative. Contributions toward the match from the applicant institution and any other third party should be identified in the column "Non-Federal Proposed Cost-Sharing/Matching Funds" on the Budget Form (Form CSREES-2004). Cash and non-cash contributions from the institution and third parties should be identified on Line Q., as appropriate, of Form CSREES-2004 and described in the budget narrative.

Proposals should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

(a) For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and

(b) For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the AORs of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

If the contribution is to be split between cash and in-kind, the exact dollar amount for each category must be clearly stated. The letter should also clearly state the budget categories that the contributed dollars should be applied to and clearly state the individual items of in-kind contributions. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support. Any cost sharing commitments specified in the proposal will be referenced and included as a condition of an award resulting from this announcement.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments, or A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

13. Current and Pending Support (Form CSREES-2005)

All applications must contain Form CSREES-2005 listing other current public or private support (including in-house support) to which personnel (i.e., individuals submitting a vitae in response to item 9.(b) of this part) identified in the application have committed portions of their time, whether or not salary support for person(s) involved is included in the budget. Please follow the instructions provided on this form. Concurrent submission of identical or similar applications to the possible sponsors will not prejudice application review or evaluation by the CSREES. However, an application that duplicates or overlaps substantially with an application already reviewed and funded (or to be funded) by another organization or agency will not be funded under this program. **Please note that the project being proposed should be included in the pending section of the form.**

For each individual identified as key personnel, include the percentage of time that each will work on the project, both during the academic year and summer. The total commitment of time devoted to the project, when combined with time for teaching, research, other sponsored agreements, and other employment obligations to the institution, must not exceed 100 percent of the normal workload for which the employee is compensated, in accordance with established institutional policies and applicable Federal cost principles.

14. Assurance Statement(s) (Form CSREES-2008)

A number of situations encountered in the conduct of projects require special assurances, supporting documentation, etc., before funding can be approved for the project. In addition to any other situation that may exist with regard to a particular project, applications involving any of the following elements must comply with the additional requirements as applicable.

(a) Recombinant DNA or RNA Research

As stated in 7 CFR Part 3015.205 (b)(3), all key personnel identified in the application and all endorsing officials of the proposing organization are required to comply with the guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health entitled, "Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules," as revised. If

your project proposes to use recombinant DNA or RNA techniques, you must so indicate by checking the “yes” box in Block 20 of Form CSREES-2002 (the Proposal Cover Page) and by completing Section A of Form CSREES-2008. For applicable applications recommended for funding, Institutional Biosafety Committee approval is required before CSREES funds will be released. Please refer to the application forms for further instructions.

(b) Animal Care

Responsibility for the humane care and treatment of live vertebrate animals used in any grant project supported with funds provided by CSREES rests with the performing organization. Where a project involves the use of living vertebrate animals for experimental purposes, all key personnel identified in an application and all endorsing officials of the proposing organization are required to comply with the applicable provisions of the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2131 et seq.), and the regulations promulgated there under by the Secretary in 9 CFR Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of these animals. If your project will involve these animals, you should check “yes” in Block 20 of Form CSREES-2002 and complete Section B of Form CSREES-2008. In the event a project involving the use of live vertebrate animals results in a grant award, funds will be released only after the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has approved the project. Please refer to the application forms for further instructions.

(c) Protection of Human Subjects

Responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects used in any grant project supported with funds provided by CSREES rests with the performing organization. Guidance on this issue is contained in the National Research Act, Pub. L. No. 93-348, as amended, and implementing regulations promulgated by the Department under 7 CFR Part 1c. If you propose to use human subjects in your project, you should check the “yes” box in Block 20 of Form CSREES-2002 and complete Section C of Form CSREES-2008. Please refer to the application forms for additional instructions.

15. Certifications

Note that by signing Form CSREES-2002 the applicant is providing the certifications required by 7 CFR Part 3017, regarding Debarment and Suspension and Drug-Free Workplace, and 7 CFR Part 3018, regarding Lobbying. The certification forms are included in the application package for informational purposes only. These forms should not be submitted with the application since by signing Form CSREES-2002 your organization is providing the required certifications. If the project will involve a subcontractor or consultant, the subcontractor/consultant should submit a Form AD-1048, Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion - Lower Tier Covered Transactions, to the grantee organization for retention in their records. This form should not be submitted to USDA.

16. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Form CSREES-2006)

As outlined in 7 CFR Part 3407 (the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service regulations implementing NEPA), the environmental data for any proposed project is to be provided to CSREES so that CSREES may determine whether any further action is needed. In some cases, however, the preparation of environmental data may not be required. Certain categories of actions are excluded from the requirements of NEPA.

In order for CSREES to determine whether any further action is needed with respect to NEPA, pertinent information regarding the possible environmental impacts of a particular project is necessary; therefore, Form CSREES-2006, "NEPA Exclusions Form," must be included in the application indicating whether the applicant is of the opinion that the project falls within a categorical exclusion and the reasons therefore. If it is the applicant's opinion that the proposed project falls within the categorical exclusions, the specific exclusion(s) must be identified.

Even though a project may fall within the categorical exclusions, CSREES may determine that an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary for an activity, if substantial controversy on environmental grounds exists or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present which may cause such activity to have a significant environmental effect.

C. Submission of Applications

1. When to Submit (Deadline Date)

Applications must be received by COB on January 15, 2003 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

2. What to Submit

An original and six (6) copies must be submitted. In addition submit two (2) copies of the application's Project Summary. All copies of the application and the Project Summary must be submitted in one package.

3. Where to Submit

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by the USDA. The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using an express mail or overnight courier service is:

Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education
Challenge Grants Program
c/o Proposal Services Unit
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Room 1420, Waterfront Centre
800 9th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Telephone: (202) 401-5048

Applications sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be sent to the following address:

Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education
Challenge Grants Program
c/o Proposal Services Unit
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
STOP 2245
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-2245

D. Acknowledgment of Applications

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the Form CSREES-2002. If the applicant's e-mail address is not indicated, CSREES will acknowledge receipt of the application by letter.

If the applicant does not receive an acknowledgment within 60 days of the submission deadline, please contact the program contact. Once the application has been assigned an application number, please cite that number on all future correspondence.

PART IV--REVIEW PROCESS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Any proposal that does not meet these requirements will be considered ineligible and will be returned to the applicant without receiving peer review. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weights, below, will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Potential for Advancing Quality of Education/Significance of the Problem (30 points).

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of food and agricultural sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include institutional long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions.

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages (25 points).

This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of educational or research support provided to the applicant institution through its partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building (20 points).

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching or research capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

4. Key Personnel (15 points).

This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and the dissemination of these findings.

5. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10 points).

This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, leverages additional funds, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority educational or research need areas.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the 2003 Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants. At the end of the fiscal year, names of panelists will be made available in such a way that the panelists cannot be identified with the review of any particular application.

PART V--AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of CSREES as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by CSREES under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another CSREES program. CSREES will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

C. Award Document and Notice of Award

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has awarded a grant under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying grant number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;

- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the grant is awarded;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the grant award; and
- (10) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular grant.

PART VI--ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Access To Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the grant state otherwise, the grantee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of grant funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

- (a) The permissible changes by the grantee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project grant shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.
- (b) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.
- (c) Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.
- (d) Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the grant.
- (e) Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the grantee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of a grant.

- (f) Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or grant award.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

1. Project Directors Conference

During the tenure of a grant, Project Director(s) may be invited to attend at least one national Project Directors meeting, if offered, in Washington, D.C., or any other announced location. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, future directions for education reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results.

2. Annual Performance Report

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact person within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project, and annually thereafter during the life of the grant. Generally, the Annual Performance Reports should include a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award.

3. Final Performance Report

A Final Performance Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact person within 90 days after the expiration date of the project. The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report should be a summary of the completed project, including: a review of project objectives and accomplishments; a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; activities undertaken to disseminate products and outcomes; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on the Project Director(s), students, the departments, the institution, and the food and agricultural sciences higher education system; and data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award.

4. Current Research Information System (CRIS) Reports

Grant recipients are required to submit annual and summary evaluation reports via the CSREES Current Research Information System (CRIS). CRIS is an electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects.

5. Other Reports

Grantees should be aware that CSREES may, as a part of its own program evaluation activities, carry out in-depth evaluations of assisted activities. Thus, grantees should be prepared to cooperate with CSREES personnel, or persons retained by CSREES, in evaluating the institutional context and the impact of any supported project. Grantees may be asked to provide general information on any students and faculty supported, in whole or in part, by a grant awarded under this program; information that may be requested includes, but is not limited to, standardized academic achievement test scores, grade point average, academic standing, career patterns, age, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship, and disability.

D. Applicable Federal Statutes and Regulations

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1.1--USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3--USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A--USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 3015--USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017--USDA implementation of Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Government wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018--USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019--USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations, or 7 CFR Part 3016--USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-102, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With State, Local, and Federally-Recognized Indian Tribal Governments.

7 CFR Part 3052--USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-profit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407--CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute)-- prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq.--Bayh-Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

E. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in a grant, it becomes a part of the record of CSREES transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in a grant will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

F. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule-related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

G. Definitions

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions are applicable:

Authorized departmental officer means the Secretary or any employee of the Department who has the authority to issue or modify grant instruments on behalf of the Secretary.

Authorized organizational representative means the official who has the authority to commit the resources of the institution.

Budget period means the interval of time (usually 12 months) into which the project period is divided for budgetary and reporting purposes.

Cash contributions means the applicant's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the applicant by non-Federal third parties.

Citizen or national of the United States means (1) a citizen or native resident of a State, the District of Columbia, or any Insular Area; or, (2) a person defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22), who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States. Where eligibility is claimed solely on the basis of permanent allegiance, documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.

Department or USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

Educational Need Area means the specific area(s) of educational focus identified in the solicitation for applications and addressed by the applicant's proposal. Educational Need Areas are derived from statutory language authorizing the grants program and specific Educational Need Areas are targeted for funding support in the solicitation for applications.

Eligible institution means a public, secondary school or junior or community college, as defined in this RFA, that meets eligibility criteria of this program.

Eligible participant means an individual who is a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this section.

Food and agricultural sciences means basic, applied, and developmental research, extension, and teaching activities in the food and fiber, agricultural, renewable natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences, in the broadest sense of these terms, including but not limited to, activities concerned with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation, utilization of food and agricultural products and services, and inclusive of programs in agriculture, natural resources, aquaculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, home economics, rural human ecology, and closely allied disciplines.

Grantee means the eligible institution designated in the grant award document as the responsible legal entity to which a grant is awarded.

Insular Area means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Joint project proposal means a proposal for a project: (1) which will involve the applicant institution working in cooperation with **one or more** other entities not legally affiliated with the applicant institution, including other schools, colleges, universities, community colleges, junior colleges, units of State government, private sector organizations, or a consortium of institutions; and (2) where the applicant institution and each cooperating entity will assume a significant role

in the conduct of the proposed project. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, **the applicant institution submitting a joint project proposal must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 70 percent of the awarded funds, and no cooperating entity may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds.** Only the applicant institution must meet the definition of an eligible institution as specified in this RFA; other entities participating in a joint project proposal are not required to meet the definition of an eligible institution.

Junior or community college means an institution of higher education that: (1) admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the State in which the institution is located and who have the ability to benefit from the training offered by the institution; (2) does not provide an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree (or an equivalent degree); and (3) (i) provides an educational program of not less than 2 years in duration that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree; or (ii) offers a 2-year program in engineering, mathematics, or the physical or biological sciences, designed to prepare a student to work as a technician or at the semiprofessional level in engineering, scientific, or other technological fields requiring the understanding and application of basic engineering, scientific, or mathematical principles of knowledge (20 U.S.C. 1101a(a)(6)).

Matching or Cost-sharing means that portion of allowable project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of third party, in-kind contributions.

Nonprofit, as applied to a school, junior or community college, agency, organization, or institution, means a school, junior or community college, agency, organization, or institution owned and operated by one or more nonprofit corporations or associations, no part of the net earnings of which inures, or may lawfully inure, to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Outcomes means specific, measurable project results and benefits that, when assessed and reported, indicate the project's plan of operation has been achieved.

Peer reviewers means experts or consultants qualified by training and experience to give expert advice on the scientific and technical merit of grant applications or the relevance of those applications to one or more of the proposal evaluation criteria. Peer reviewers may be ad hoc or convened as a panel.

Plan of Operation means a detailed, step-by-step description of how the applicant intends to accomplish the project's outcomes. At a minimum, the plan should include a timetable indicating how outcomes are achieved, a description of resources to be used or acquired, and the responsibilities expected of all project personnel.

Prior approval means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined in this section.

Project means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by a grant awarded under this program.

Project director means the single individual designated by the grantee in the grant application and approved by the Secretary who is responsible for the direction and management of the project.

Project period means the period, as stated in the award document and modifications thereto, if any, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

Regular project proposal means a proposal for a project: (1) where the applicant institution will be the sole entity involved in the execution of the project; or (2) which will involve the applicant institution and one or more other entities, but where the involvement of the other entity(ies) does not meet the requirements for a joint proposal as defined in this section.

Secondary school means a nonprofit institutional day or residential school that provides secondary education, as determined under State law, except that such term does not include any education beyond grade 12 (Section 14101(25) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8801(25))).

Secretary means the Secretary of Agriculture and any other officer or employee of the Department of Agriculture to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

Teaching means formal classroom and/or laboratory instruction, or practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and matters related thereto (such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies) conducted by eligible educational institutions.

Third party in-kind contributions means non-cash contributions of property or services provided by non-Federal third parties, including real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property, directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

United States means the several States, the territories and possessions of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.